

the marquee • act 3 • scene 3

MAY 1977

The Association of Kansas Theatre, Past and Future

AKT was founded approximately five years ago to be the first state theatre organization in Kansas and a state affiliate of the national American Theatre Association. Our function is to aid all in the state who are interested in the art of theatre, including educational theatre at all levels, religious theatre, community theatre and professional theatre. Dissemination of information seems to be a primary objective, including our newsletter and the all-state theatre convention, means through which theatre practitioners can aid one another and improve their skills in the arts. As I see it, the goals of AKT include the following:

- To unite theatre people from across the state
- To create an exchange of ideas and hopes
- To offer educational opportunities for improvement of the quality of theatre in Kansas
- To encourage wider support and dissemination of theatre (and all the arts) in both the schools and communities of our state

In the long run, the only true indication of the completion of our goals will be an obvious improvement in the overall condition of the art of theatre in Kansas. At a recent meeting of the Kansas Alliance for Arts Education, R. Wayne Nelson of Lawrence stated that there had been no improvement in the state of arts education in Kansas since that day, many years ago, when he began teaching. The goal of the Alliance is to provide "all the arts for all the children." Our challenge in AKT is even greater since it includes bringing the arts to all the people, adults as well as children, in terms of quantity, quality and variety. Only by joining together and working in concert with the other arts organizations in Kansas can we hope to succeed.

Lloyd Anton Frerer
President, AKT

Alterations in the Board of Directors

New divisional chairpersons have been elected in a number of areas. Shirley Windhorst of Minneapolis High School has been replaced in the Secondary School Theatre Division by Nadine Charlsen from Campus High School (2100 West 55th St. South, Wichita, KS 67218). Charlotte Dodson (121 West 14th, Apt. D, Lawrence, KS 66044) has succeeded Phil Grecian of Topeka in the Children's Theatre Division. And, earlier in the year, George Mastick from Neosho County Community College

turned over the reins of the Community and Junior College Theatre Division to Kevin Alexander (Allen County Community College, Iola, KS 66749). We should all be thankful to such people as Shirley, Phil and George for the hard-won time away from their own theatres and their extraordinary efforts on our behalf. And we say welcome and good luck to Nadine, Kevin and Charlotte. Please offer these new chairpersons your wholehearted support and encouragement.

Financial Report

AKT is in sound condition financially at this time. Our state conference turned a profit this year, while it would have shown a loss last year without our grant from the Kansas Arts Commission. The reason was unexpected income from the Community Theatre Contest which was well attended by a paying audience. The winner and representative from Kansas to the regional contest in Minnesota, by the way, was the Winfield Community Theatre production of Leonard Bernstein's musical, "Trouble in Tahiti". At any rate, the financial report is as follows:

Income from Memberships & registration	\$2668.65
Community Theatre Contest Tickets	1010.00
Kansas Arts Commission Grant	<u>650.00</u>
Total Income	\$4328.65
Expenses for Total Convention	2789.98
Return of KAC Grant	<u>650.00</u>
Balance	\$ 888.67

As you can see, without the profit from the Theatre contest and the KAC grant, we would have been \$100 in the red. Therefore, we have applied again for a grant of \$600 from the Arts Commission for the conference next year. Since the community theatre contest comes every other year, we are going to attempt a Kansas high school theatre festival next time, an innovative program to be coordinated by Nadine Charlsen with Keith Akins and the Kansas High School Activities Association.

The Third Annual Kansas Theatre Conference

At the close of the Conference, the Board of Directors met to conduct business and discuss the Conference itself. Our next conference will be held in Wichita on March 10, 11 and 12 of 1978. Kansas Community Theatre Conference received \$150 to be distributed at \$25 each to the six officers of our new sub-regions for business expenses, and \$150 was sent to help pay the travel expenses of Winfield Community Theatre in their trip to the Minnesota regional contest as Kansas representative. The Board was very pleased with the overall success of the conference. Some suggestions were:

- 1) to avoid scheduling events separated only by paper-thin folding walls where the sound from one session can interfere with another;
- 2) to arrange more time for longer business meetings for the separate divisions;
- 3) to leave some time between conference sessions, ten or fifteen minutes to get from one place to the other with an occasional potty stop.

If you were at the conference and have a complaint or suggestion for improvement, change or some new program, please do not hesitate to communicate your ideas to your divisional representative or the president. The following reports of selected sessions at the conference were chosen on the basis of those which were well reported and which could be explained in written form. For example, there is just no way to explain the fantastic things demonstrated in makeup by Bob Kelly.

Keynote Speakers

Max Gorelik, noted Broadway designer, author and educator, spoke against the avant-garde and anti-rational theatre of our day. Words are essential to a mature, life-illuminating theatre. Tragedy, comedy and public issues, to be seen on the front page of any newspaper, offer subjects for a true theatre; yet it is obvious that these themes are unwelcome in the current theatre. Human problems are more easily attributed to a metaphysical human condition rather than to the economic and social forces controlled by men. Too much theatre has become escapist, living in a world of fantasy. Mr. Gorelik implied that theatrical experimentation today is concerned with theatrical technique rather than controversial subject matter — experimentation in a vacuum.

Dale Huffington, Professor of Theatre at the University of Minnesota and President-Elect of the American Theatre Association, spoke about the need to plan ahead in larger terms in order to cope with those forces which will affect theatre everywhere. The distribution of funds essential to all the operations of society will be affected by all trends of the future. How will your theatre and audience be affected by: a 20% drop in high school age students in the next few years (a 40% drop in some rural areas); a 70% rise in the costs of fuel for transportation, heating and cooling; an increasing proportion of the community being elderly? We must plan for such changes. We must make an effort to influence the choices of priorities which must be made in the future by legislatures and other governing bodies. Others will make these choices for us, if we do not, and the arts will suffer major setbacks.

Participation Theatre for Young Audiences

Professor Jed Davis and his touring company student-performers from the University of Kansas gave a marvelous demonstration which had everyone in the session performing vigorously as the student audience. Dr. Davis defined Participation Theatre as a presentation of a story with an established story-line, containing a definite structure for audience participation on a limited basis. Adult actors, at least high school age or above, function as drama leaders because strict control of the audience is

essential. For this type of theatre, a flexible open space is better than a traditional theatre arrangement, a space such as those provided in gyms and public libraries and large classrooms. The child audience may participate on many levels:

- A) participation may work as calisthetics, a replacement for recess, physically oriented but having little to do with theatre.
- B) participation may just be as sound effects, while children remain in their seats.
- C) participation may be as "stones along the road", taking physical part in the play but having no clear effect upon the story or outcome.
- D) participation, at its most sophisticated, may be to help the protagonist make decisions and accomplish his or her goal in the story.

All of the examples demonstrated by Dr. Davis and his actors were of the latter kind, short segments of four scripts:

Chinook by Paddy Campbell (Playwrights' Co-op)
In the Beginning by Bernice Bronson (New Plays for Children)

On Trial by Brian Way (Educational Arts Assoc.)
The Incredible Jungle Journey of Fenda Maria by Jack Stokes (in **Contemporary Children's Theatre**, Betty Lifton, ed.)

If you are interested in further information concerning Participation Theatre, the key and fairly brief book is Pat Hale's **Participation Theatre for Young Audiences**, published by New Plays for Children, Box 273, Rowayton, Conn. 06853. And Brian Way, the internationally recognized expert, will be giving a workshop at Fort Hays State University on November 11, 12 and 13, 1977.

Director/Actor Relationships

Dr. Suzanne Trauth, Director of Theatre at Fort Hays State University, presented a thought provoking workshop-demonstration concerning the inter-personal relations which can be developed between the director and the cast.

- 1) Dr. Trauth explained directing styles based on a continuum from an inclusive-open type directing style to a closed-preclusive type. She then demonstrated the two extreme styles by directing two students in scenes using both styles.
- 2) Secondly, she discussed Shostrom's manipulative roles as compared to the modification of those roles as she has developed them for the theatre. Again, she demonstrated by using three of the roles with three students who role-played three types of actors.
- 3) She also presented the idea of using questionnaires with actors in order to get feedback regarding the interpersonal relationships — i.e., how the actor felt toward the rehearsal, the director, and the other cast members.
- 4) To conclude, she fielded questions and opened the session for discussion.

Choreography for Directors

Carveth Osterhaus, director and choreographer for the Oklahoma City University Musical Theatre program, operated a workshop in which he explained and demonstrated a simple process of choreography for theatre directors who were inexperienced in dance. The sections in which the workshop members were on their feet and moving to rhythms are difficult to describe, but the overall approach to the job of choreographing a number, hopefully, will lend itself to explanation.

Dance is choreographed with exactly the same approach as pre-blocking, according to the dramatic situation, intent and characters at that particular moment. Sit down, listen to that music, and write a scenario. Then, divide up the music and decide how many people, exactly where on the stage, and for how many counts they'll be doing something.

Mr. Osterhaus suggested the following example of the process in action. Take ten people. Divide them into groups, say two groups of 3 and two groups of 2. Work in floor patterns, as if looking down on the stage or a floorplan. Each small group will be working in a particular section of the stage. The music is divided by beats into patterns of 8 counts, and a series of different rhythms or patterns of counting are developed to those 8 counts: one, two, three . . . , or one and two and three . . . , or one, (pause), three, four . . . , and the like. Each small group is working with a varied pattern of the 8 count. First the dancers clap the rhythm in order to learn it. Then they tap it out with their feet while still seated. Finally, they get up and march in place to the rhythm. All of dancing boils down to simple marching in terms of footwork, left-right-left-right stepping in the rhythm pattern of the 8 counts. Then the stepping pattern can be varied by either doing it in place, or moving forward and backward, or by moving to the left or the right.

Mr. Osterhaus warns the director not to repeat the same step, even with simple movement variations, for more than 32 counts (four repetitions of the 8 count pattern). Therefore, most numbers would require about three entirely different step-pattern routines, each covering 32 counts. Careful pre-planning is the key to success. The director needs to count out the music and write down the number of 8 count rhythm sections. Then, plan different variations of the 8 pattern for each small group, as well as the particular area of the stage each will occupy. A useful variation is to have small groups exchange areas of the stage at some point during the number.

Dance, from the simple to the most complex, is all choreographed in this manner. Even Ballenchine does his homework first, sitting there with a tape recorder and a score — and listing side by side with the score

- A) a scenario
- B) particular step patterns and
- C) stage positions for each section of 8 beats for each sub-group of players or dancers

Mr. Osterhaus was superb. He managed to convince even those of us who are least physically coordinated that the process of choreography is simple enough for any director to handle, if the director is willing to work at the pre-planning.

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